

INDIANA'S CONSERVATION SHOWCASE

Helping People...

...Help the Land



Initiative Reduces Sediment/Nutrient Load in Mississippi River Basin



Greater Wabash River RC&D is working to leverage several partnership funding opportunities with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the Wildcat watershed. The RC&D has completed their second year of a successful Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) program which is addressing sediment loading and nutrient leaching by utilizing a system of conservation practices. This project is designed to help producers implement practices that will avoid, control, and trap nutrients and sediment before entering surface water and improve wildlife habitat while maintaining agricultural productivity. This year they have further leveraged this work by entering into two additional agreements with NRCS: a Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCPI) project focused on invasive species control, and a Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT) agreement providing increased technical assistance in the watershed. In addition to these agreements, The Walton Foundation is also providing technical assistance funding to the RC&D. By leveraging SWAT and Foundation funding, the RC&D has hired a technician to help promote both the MRBI-CCPI and CCPI initiatives.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management lists over 170 segments of streams in the Wildcat Creek Watershed on the 2008 303(d) Impaired Waterways List. Impairments noted on the list include: excessive sediment and nutrients, algae, impaired biotic communities and low levels of dissolved oxygen. According to the *South Fork Wildcat Creek Pathogen, Sediment, and Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)*, over 80 percent of the total nitrogen and total phosphorus and over 65 percent of the total suspended solids in the South Fork Wildcat Creek are a result of rural runoff. Likewise, MRBI models indicate that Indiana contributes over 10 percent of the total nitrogen over eight percent of the total phosphorus to the Gulf of Mexico's hypoxia each year.

(Continued on page 2)

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Based on the available data, the MRBI project is addressing the broader resource concerns of excessive levels of nutrients in surface and ground waters, excessive levels of total suspended solids in surface waters, and unsuitable fish and wildlife habitat. They are addressing these concerns by working with producers to install conservation systems through both the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). Natural resource concerns addressed through EQIP focus on reducing runoff and leaching of sediment and nutrients while improving crop productivity and include: soil erosion; soil condition; groundwater and surface water quality; air quality; and plant condition. Natural resource concerns addressed through WHIP focus on improving habitat for wildlife and include: surface water quality; air quality; plant condition; and fish and wildlife.

To date, the Greater Wabash River RC&D has contracted approximately \$1.5 million dollars in EQIP and WHIP assistance to producers for conservation practices, which will be installed over the next three years:

- 14,148.8 acres of cover crops
- 2705.1 acres of mulch till
- 4.2 acres of forage and biomass plantings
- 12,396.6 acres of pest management
- 10,087.7 acres of waste utilization
- 0.8 acres of critical area planting
- 2 closure of waste impoundments
- 968.4 acres of strip till
- 30 acres invasive species control
- 1.7 acres of tree establishment
- 2 waste storage facilities
- 0.5 acres of mulching
- 1.1 acres of heavy use area protection
- 250 feet of subsurface drain
- 0.3 acres of grassed waterways
- 3 WASCObS
- 3,460 ft underground outlet
- 1 sediment basin
- 1 animal mortality facility
- 1 grade stabilization structure
- 16.4 acres of brush management

The combined effect of these initiatives and their successful partnerships with 26 different conservation organizations, works in harmony to ultimately have a greater impact on reductions in sediment and nutrient runoff into the Gulf of Mexico. Now, that is partnership.



AT-A-GLANCE

PROJECT SCOPE

To implement practices that will avoid, control, and trap nutrients and sediment before entering surface water and improve wildlife habitat while maintaining agricultural productivity

PARTNERS INVOLVED

Greater Wabash River RC&D
Tippecanoe County SWCD
Clinton County SWCD
Carroll County SWCD
Howard County SWCD
Tipton County SWCD
IN Association of Soil & Water Con. Districts
National Assoc. of Conservation Districts
The Walton Foundation

NRCS PROGRAM UTILIZATION

- Mississippi River Basin Initiative
- Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative
- Strategic Watershed Action Team

FEDERAL DOLLARS CONTRACTED

\$1,627,879.00

MRBI Dollars

FY10 - \$465,297.00

FY11 - \$996,082.00

CCPI Dollars

FY11 - \$30,000.00

SWAT Dollars

Over 3 years - \$136,500.00

NUMBER OF LANDOWNERS HELPED

General Assistance - 43

FY10 - 18

FY11 - 25

Financial Assistance - 34

FY10 - 16

FY11 - 18

ACRES OF LAND IMPROVED

40,331.6 acres